



Cancer Experts Warn Against Eliminating Either Fat or Carbs to Lose Weight

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What's making Americans overweight - the fat or the carbs? The answer is neither or both - or rather too much of either or both, say experts at the American Institute for Cancer Research. "The answer is too many calories. If you want to lose weight and stay healthy, you have to eat less and exercise more, not simply cut whole categories of foods out of your diet," says Melanie Polk, R.D., AICR Director of Nutrition Education.

New Information Creates Confusion

The role of carbohydrates is hotly debated. One hypothesis suggests that refined carbohydrates such as those found in white sugar, white rice and processed cereals raise insulin levels for some people, which in turn initiates a sequence of events leading to overeating and storage of excess fat at the waist and hips.

"Even if this theory about insulin level proves to have merit, abandoning all carbohydrates for high protein diets makes little sense. A more sensible response is to eat less refined carbs and more carbs that do not produce a spike in insulin levels (whole grains, vegetables, fruits and beans) in conjunction with small amounts of lean meat, poultry and fish," Polk says.

Managing Proportion and Portion Size

In September 2000, AICR launched the New American Plate program, which called for a change in the proportion of food on the plate and a reduction in portion size for those concerned about overweight. The traditional American plate contains a large slab of meat, a small serving

of a vegetable and some form of potatoes, white rice or pasta. It provides too many calories to help most people maintain a healthy weight and too few nutrients to prevent chronic illnesses.

The New American Plate program urges people to change the proportion of food on their plate to 2/3 (or more) vegetables, fruit, whole grains and beans to 1/3 or less meat, chicken or fish. Vegetables, fruit, whole grains and beans contain phytochemicals (unique plant substances), vitamins, and minerals that help the body fight disease and are low in calories. So the "2/3 to 1/3" ratio should help people maintain a healthy weight.

For those concerned about losing weight, the New American Plate program advises gradually reducing the size of portions on the plate. "The first step in any weight reduction program should be reducing the amount of food consumed and increasing the amount of physical activity. But remember: the right proportion of plant-based food to animal food is important to your long-term health. So gradually reduce the portion size on your plate, while maintaining the 2/3 to 1/3 proportion," Polk advises.

If your portions, and weight, have been slowly increasing, take the initiative. *Shape Your Future...Your Weigh!*[™] can provide additional practical strategies to prevent weight gain. Your Health and Wellness Center (HAWC) and Dietitian provides guidance on modifying your portion size to stay fit and healthy. Call them at today!